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ABSTRACT

Two recent studies clarify the growing importance of tribal college libraries in the overall tribal effort to educate Indian people. Cheryl Duran (1991) applied Flamholtz's organizational development model to the role of libraries in the development of tribal colleges. During the new venture, expansion, professional, and consolidation stages, respectively, tribal college libraries determine the information needs of the college and community, develop basic library resources and capabilities, satisfy standards for accreditation and acceptance within the larger educational community, and forge working relationships among themselves and other non-Indian institutions. Cheryl Metoyer-Duran (1992) interviewed tribal college presidents about the expanding role of tribal college libraries in Indian communities. Tribal college presidents reported that the activities of these libraries are related to the preservation of tribal culture, tribal economic development efforts, and developing information resources and providing services for local elementary and secondary schools and the community. Libraries are an important part of the ongoing crusade for self-determination. Their presence influences curriculum, instruction, and administration at all levels of Indian education. (SV)

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ERIC DIGEST

Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools August 1992

The Emerging Role of Tribal College Libraries In Indian Education

by D. Michael Pavel

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THIS DIGEST examines the emerging role of tribal college libraries as one aspect of Indian education, which encompasses preschool through adult education and higher education. Tribal college libraries have received comparatively little attention in the research literature. When these libraries are mentioned at all, readers learn only a few briefly stated facts (see, for example, Carnegie Report, 1989). Now, two recent studies provide more extensive information. One study examines the role of libraries in the development of tribal colleges and the other offers perspectives of tribal college presidents about the expanding role of tribal college libraries. Both studies clarify the growing importance of tribal college libraries in the overall tribal effort to educate Indian people.

Libraries and the development of tribal colleges.

Duran (1991) applied the Flamholtz model (1986) to examine the role of libraries in the development of tribal colleges. The Flamholtz model emphasizes four developmental stages experienced by organizations:

(1) the new venture stage includes preparation, planning, and analysis;
(2) the expansion stage includes efforts to increase resources and enhance services;
(3) the professional stage involves formalizing methods, procedures and practices; and
(4) the consolidation stage, during which the objectives of the organization receive wide acceptance.

Tribal college libraries, like the colleges themselves, are in varying stages of development in terms of increasing staff, facilities, support services, and their collections of volumes. At each stage, tribal college libraries contribute to the broader framework of Indian education.

During the *new venture stage*, planners work to figure out the level of library and information services needed to support the tribal college curriculum and fulfill community needs. Two goals commonly adopted by tribal colleges are to meet the instructional needs of faculty and students and to help preserve and perpetuate traditional culture in the community. Toward these ends, librarians begin by identifying the resources needed to support the core curriculum, and by establishing an archive of print and nonprint materials related to the tribe. The process of determining information needs is useful to all segments of Indian education within the tribal community.

During the *expansion stage* tribal colleges develop basic library resources and capabilities. Working within limited resources, tribal college libraries first make sure they have provided sufficient academic materials to fulfill the growing education needs of the tribal community. By building library resources and capabilities, the vitality of Indian education programs is enhanced at all levels, not just higher education. Some benefits to the service area include the tribal college's strengthened ability to provide technical support and training to local school practitioners. This can help improve planning, implementation, and continuation of Indian education programs for Native students of all age groups.

The tribal college enters the *professional stage* when it mobilizes its resources to broaden its curriculum and fulfill requirements necessary for accreditation. The tribal college must have its library up to certain standards to achieve and maintain accreditation. Accreditation of tribal colleges represents progress toward self-determination in defining educational programs and in gaining acceptance within the larger educational community.

Consolidation is the final stage of organizational development as defined by Flamholtz. During this stage of development, Indian higher education will advance to levels commensurate with other distinguished non-Indian colleges and universities. "Some tribal colleges are just now beginning to address how they will manage transition during this fourth stage" (Duran, 1991, p. 401). To help make the transition, tribal colleges strive to secure external financial support, gain increased recognition from the larger educational community, and hire faculty and administration that reflect the tribal community. Many tribal college libraries (14) have gained some external financial support by becoming designated as the tribe's "public" library. This qualifies them for funding from the Library Services for Indian Tribes Program, Title IV of the Library Service and Construction Act (LSCA), which provides support for training, library materials, and construction of new library facilities. At the same time, tribal college libraries have forged working relationships among themselves and other non-Indian libraries. Additionally, they have sought to identify tribal members willing to carry the work forward by making careers in library science.

Expanding roles

Another recent study reveals the perceptions of tribal college presidents on the expanding role of tribal college libraries in Indian communities. Metoyer-Duran (1992) presents findings derived from focus group interviews with tribal college presidents. Interview topics included the role of tribal college libraries in preserving tribal culture, enhancing economic opportunities, meeting the community education needs, and encouraging library staff to assume additional responsibilities.

Tribal college presidents and their communities consider the preservation of tribal culture paramount. The presidents of these institutions suggest that libraries are contributing to this process by

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going beyond passive archiving to ventures that involve community members in daily activities. For example, library staff members collaborate with tribal elders on oral history projects that allow elders the opportunity to educate the community about tribal history, language, and culture. "A tribal college president remarked that 'once the tribe has recorded this information, the library is the best place to see that our heritage is understood.'" (Metoyer-Duran, 1992, p. 365). Actively involving community members in the use of educational facilities is a hallmark of Indian education programs. In higher education, tribal college libraries carry on this tradition for the benefit of young and old alike.

The presidents also suggest that an inspiring array of library activities enhances tribal economic development. For example, employers on the reservations can turn to library resources and equipment to train employees. Career awareness and job-locating materials are available to community members. Some libraries record ongoing efforts to reclaim and maintain control of tribal natural resources. In addition, the tribal college libraries support grant-writing activities to secure external funding. Indian education and the economic vitality of tribal communities go hand in hand, and tribal college libraries cultivate this mutually beneficial relationship.

Tribal college presidents are quick to point out that tribal college library staff members involve themselves in a myriad of non-Indian and Indian education programs outside the tribal college. For example, one activity involves collecting material statewide to support the gifted and talented program for American Indian students who are designing and developing science projects. Another tribal college library has produced an annotated bibliography of resources on tribal history for students to use when preparing reports. Also, partnerships with local schools allow tribal college libraries to remain open during the evenings and on weekends for students in the K-12 system. Such efforts by tribal college libraries show the commitment of tribal colleges to increasing the educational achievement of American Indians and Alaska Natives in the primary and secondary grade levels.

The presidents also report that tribal college library staff often work proactively, serving as catalysts. They not only provide information upon request, but also anticipate the need for certain information, and actively seek out potential users of it. Librarians at some tribal colleges have initiated an array of services. Services include assisting the tribe with documentation, establishing on-line networks, and exploring sophisticated technology like CD-ROMs and fiber optics. They encourage literacy by "...teaching students to use multiple types of information resources to answer questions, develop knowledge, or solve problems" (Metoyer-Duran, 1992, p. 367). In all these ways, librarians play an important part in linking their institutions with their tribal communities.

Conclusion

Libraries are an important part of the ongoing crusade of tribal communities to gain self-determination. Their presence influences curriculum, instruction, and administration at all levels of Indian education. Also, tribal college libraries are playing a central role in further developing widespread acceptance of Indian education within the mainstream educational system. To this end, tribal college library staff also take on additional responsibilities to ensure that Indian education is meeting the needs of American Indians and Alaska Natives of all ages and educational backgrounds.

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